

Chapter 6. Town Government & Facilities

The Board of Selectmen

Form of Government

Since its incorporation, the Town of Newton and its residents have been served by dedicated members of the community, giving generously of their time and expertise to the betterment of the town.

The Town is governed by a five -member Board of Selectmen elected to staggered three year terms. Per the provisions of NH RSA 41:8, "the selectmen shall manage the prudential affairs of the town and perform the duties by law prescribed."

Newton adopted the official ballot referendum form of government ("SB2") in 1996. The Town meeting exercises all powers of the town except those that are assigned by law to the Board of Selectmen or other officers. The Board of Selectmen is the executive, managerial, and administrative body that carries out the votes of Town meeting.

Authority rests with the board acting as a whole (RSA 41:8). All actions taken by the selectmen must be voted on by a majority of the board at a public meeting that complies with the Right to Know law (RSA 91-A).

Operations

Working in cooperation with the Town Administrator, Department Heads, employees, residents, and a host of others, the primary objective of the Board remains the oversight and management of the Town's prudential affairs.

The Selectmen meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at Town Hall. The town's website and community calendar provide notice of last-minute changes or additional meetings. Agendas for each meeting are posted in the lobby of Town Hall and our website. The meetings are aired live on Newton's cable access television channel 20 on Xfinity.

Legal Basis & Responsibilities

In addition to its broad prudential functions, the Board of Selectmen is provided substantive authority under a number of specific state statutes. Among the variety of duties and responsibilities assigned to the Selectmen include:

- Regulation of town highways and commons (RSA 41:11)
- Licensing of many different purposes including community events (RSA 31:100), transient vendors (RSA 31:102-a), and parades and other types of shows (RSA 286)
- Health regulations (RSA 147)
- Setting fees for regulatory programs such as building permits (RSA 41: 9-a) or use of various town facilities.
- Establish and amend local welfare guidelines (RSA 165:1)
- Manage and regulate use of town property (RSA 41:11-a)
- Financial accounting and safeguarding (RSA 41:9)
- Appointing of other officials (RSA 41:2, RSA 41:18, RSA 41:29-a, RSA 41:38, RSA 128:1) and filling of

vacancies (RSA 652:12 and RSA 669:62 – 75)

Cable Committee

Introduction

The Mission of the Cable Committee is to provide local Public, Educational and Governmental cable access to the Town of Newton and its residents. The Committee strives to keep Newton's local access channel active and current and provide up-to-date video and audio platforms.

Although the Cable station offers cable broadcast directly to residents, it has made significant expansion into keeping meetings online (through channels like YouTube and web) to better reach the residents where they are at.

Group Composition

The Cable Committee is comprised of five Members, one Cable Station Manager and one Liaison from the Board of Selectmen.



Future Challenges and Plans

The Cable Committee hopes to reach more residents and encourages residents to let us know what they want from their station. Public participation is changing, and we are trying to stay up to date. With the ability to perform hybrid meetings (those online and in person) at the Town Hall, the Committee researched and recommended ways to increase public participation at the local level. We hope to be able to meet the residents where they are at and understand that cable broadcasts might not be the most efficient means of distributing information, but for some residents it is one of their most trusted means.

As technology evolves and moves forward, the Cable Committee will respond by upgrading equipment and applications. The Committee will continue to expand local programming by reaching out to Town Boards, Committees, Commissions and Departments to encourage them to provide vital and interesting news and information.

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission, comprised of 5 members and one alternate, meets monthly. Its responsibilities are "for the proper utilization and protection of the natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources of said city or town." (New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated Chapter RSA 36-A). The Stewardship Committee also comes under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. This

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committee monitors the Hidden Acres Easement.

Additionally, as permitted in the RSA's, Newton's Conservation Commission oversees town conservation wetlands and forests, and can receive gifts as approved by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission advises other town boards and officials about steps it advises for the protection of the natural and watershed resources, including protection of scenic roads.



Conservation Properties

Conservation Commission monitors open space and natural resources. Currently some of these resources include many wetlands, like Powwow River, Little River, East Meadow River, Country Pond, and woodlands like the Busch Farm, Guscora Land, Stronach Property, Currierville Land, Pilgram Home Land and Hadley Road Land. We also have conservation trails like the Peanut Trail, The Old Trolley Track, Old Lower Road and the conservation trail on the west side of Greenie Park. The unique and fragile Historic Preservation Easement at Hidden Acres is a prime example of preserving our Historic Land and Buildings.

Scenic roads are in the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. Newton has seven scenic roads: Gould Hill Road, Bartlett Street, Heath Street, Maple Avenue, Currierville Road, Gale Village Road and Town Hall Road.

Conservation Goals

The Conservation Commission has a goal to expand some of our habitat corridors by connecting our current corridors to additional land.

Residents have expressed interest in the preserving open space and safeguarding of wetlands. By harmonizing open space preservation concerns with the need to protect water resource areas, our land can be protected for the enjoyment of the residents, as well as wildlife habitat. Open space, wildlife corridors, and buffers, preserve rural character, protect our natural resources. Education for proper septic maintenance are crucial in protecting the environment.



Future Challenges:

- Yearly, survey one conservation parcel of land. (Very Costly)
- Hold yearly manure workshops to show Best Management Practices, preventing contamination of ground water. (compiling address of potential contamination)



- Continue to monitor water quality at Country Pond, in conjunction with the Kingston Conservation Commission and County Pond Lake Association.
- Regular site walks on Busch Farm, Peanut Trail and Hidden Acres
- Purchase additional signs for Conservation Land, with hours and allowable usages. (costly)
- Acquire more conservation land through gifts or purchases. (costly)
- Create a map of conservation areas and habitat corridors (costly)
- Yearly, hire a Forester to maintain some of the conservation properties. (costly)

Fire Department

The Town of Newton is served by the Newton Fire/Rescue which is composed of approximately 26 on-call firefighters and EMTs. The fire chief, one deputy, and department Officers direct all the department personnel.

All equipment is housed at one of two locations. Headquarters is located at 8D Merrimac Road or the sub-station (Station 2) on West Main Street, which is part of the Horace Williams Community Center.

The new fire station was built in 2017 and houses the town's Emergency Operation Center along with the communications center.



Photo courtesy of Marie Sapienza

The communications system at the fire headquarters provides communications for the town's Public Service Energy plant in Seabrook. It is capable of servicing fire, police, and emergency management. The Newton Junction sub-station is privately owned by the Newton Junction Baptist Church. It is connected to a small Community Hall. This facility is in good



condition and, in conjunction with the new station, is an adequate supplement for the protection of public safety.

Equipment:

The following is a list of town-owned fire-fighting and Emergency Response equipment:

- Engine 1 1999
- Engine 2 1991
- Tank 4 2016
- Tank 5 1993
- Rescue 6 1997
- Ambulance 1 2005
- Forestry 1 1988
- Car 1 2013
- Car 2 2006
- Utility 1 2017



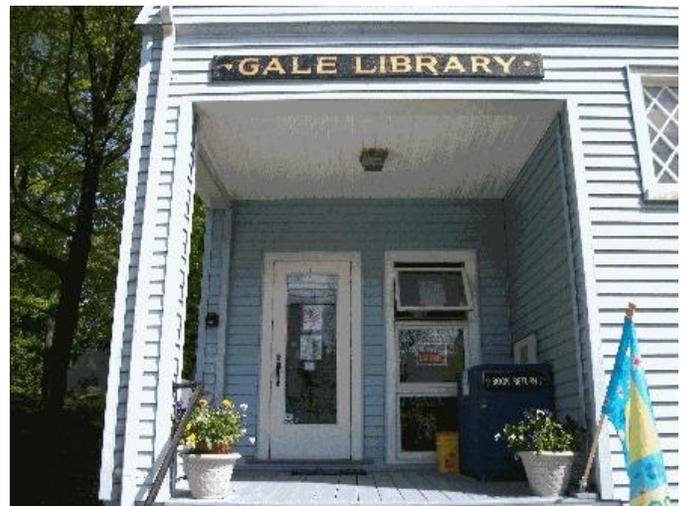
Recommendations:

Due to the high cost of equipment, monies for future apparatus should be set aside annually in the Capital Reserve Fund. Ongoing concerns with the Newton Junction sub- Fire Station. (Station 2)
Replacement of 1988 forestry truck
Water rescue equipment

The Gale Library

Introduction

The Gale Library assembles, preserves and administers a collection of materials of value and use to the community to support clients in their personal, cultural, educational and civic interests. The library also provides a sense of community by connecting people and ideas in a welcoming and safe environment.



Since 1978, 43 years, the library has occupied its present site consisting of approximately 3,000 sq. feet of usable space. The building itself is over 100 years old, having been built

in 1900. A capital reserve fund was started in 1982 to provide for future alterations or for a new building.

The library is open 32 hours weekly with one full time library director and 5 part time employees. The Gale Library Board of Trustees is the governing body of the Library.

Future Needs

The following are our basic needs, not necessarily in order of priority:

We have several basic infrastructure needs that need to be addressed if we continue with the library in its current location. We will need a new roof and a new heating system.

We need more space for additional shelving for more books, more storage space.



There should be a dedicated meeting/community space that does not interfere with patron quiet activities such as reading or computer use. We believe that the town would benefit from such a room. The room should be part of the library building but be placed such that it is accessible even when the library is closed.

We also need a space in which students might study. We have no dedicated space for middle school and young adult populations; these students share a space with the babies, toddlers and grade school students.

We need additional rest rooms. We have one bathroom now for staff and patrons to share. Also, the building is not ADA compliant. We are grandfathered in for now, as long as we don't undertake any major renovations.

We have insufficient work space for the staff to perform certain duties simultaneously, such as processing and cataloging new books, repairing books, checking out books for patrons, and generating reports.

We have 11 parking spaces total, not enough. Parking on the road is somewhat dangerous as it is a state road. There is no land around the library suitable for expanded parking.

Highway Department

Overview

Newton has 44 miles of roads. Like so much of the country, most of our roads and bridges were built in the 50's and 60's, with a shelf life of 50 years for major structures, and 20-25 for roads, and there is a great deal of deferred maintenance not only in Newton but nationwide.

Organization

The Highway Department, with a budget of \$347,000 that held flat for thirteen years and

had a 2.4% increase in 2020, handles snow removal, road repaving and sealing, and repair of road culverts and drains. There is one fulltime and one parttime employees. The town owns no trucks, shovels or other equipment, but instead leases equipment from the Road Agent.

Recent Achievements & Future Challenges

5 miles of roads have been repaved, 5 major culverts and approximately 1000' of miscellaneous culvert has been installed or rebuilt in Newton over the past 13 years, using both budgeted and grant money.

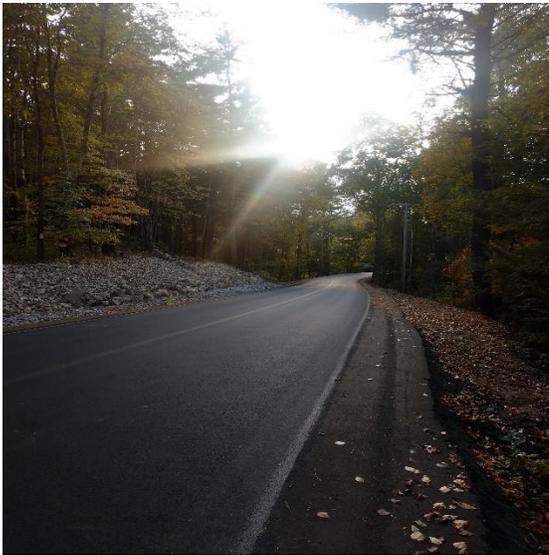


There is a need to build a capital reserve for equipment for the time when leasing of all highway equipment is not available.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Introduction:

The Newton Historical Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1971. The society was officially incorporated as a 501-C-3 charitable organization two years later in 1973. The Society owns the Primary School Museum and its contents located at 22 South Main St. Newton, NH. The Society also owns the contents of all buildings on the Marshall House Museum property located at 5 Wallace St. Newton, NH. The Town of Newton owns the buildings and the land located at 5 Wallace St.



In an ideal world, 2 miles of roadway would be repaved each year to keep Newton roadways in good shape, at an additional budgeted cost of \$350-\$400,000 per year to keep up with ongoing deterioration of our roadways.

Group Composition:

The membership of the Newton, NH Historical Society consists of current and former residents of the town of Newton.



Recent History:

Since 2007, the Society has been operating under the direction and guidance of basically the same group of active members. The major accomplishments of this group have been:

- The renovation of the Village Primary School (c. 1850) located at 22 Main Street and its conversion into the town's second museum.
- Major repairs made to the carriage barn located on the Marshall House Museum property at 5 Wallace St.
- Obtaining a state grant from the NH State Council on the Arts for the restoration of the town's two stage curtains located in the Town Hall.

A full list of the Society's accomplishments can be found in the Appendix.

Future Challenges:

Securing funding and the enlistment of younger members for the continued operation of the Society.

Accomplishments of Historical Society

Over the years, active society members have accomplished many goals for the society and the town. The following is a listing of some of the more notable accomplishments:

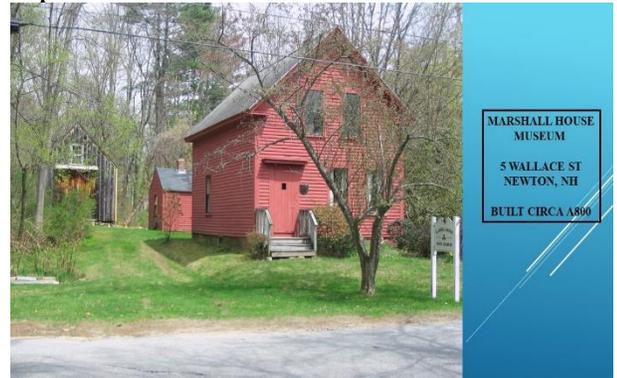
- Formed an Executive Board and designated Committee Chairs.
- Initiated an annual Fall Festival Fundraiser. This is the Society's only fundraiser.
- Created various computer and paper slide shows of Newton businesses and historic events for display at the town museums and the annual Society Fall Festivals.
- Initiated the installation of fire extinguishers & first aid kits at the Marshall House and Primary School museums.
- Installed a rotating documents / photo display in the lobby of the former Merrimac Savings Bank, which is still present in today's North Shore Bank.
- Initiated multiple free yearly presentations for the public, in conjunction with the NH Humanities Council.
- In 2011, completed the interior restoration of the 1850 Village Primary School and its conversion to the town's second museum.

- In 2012, the Society's Hayford "Diplomat" carriage won the People's Choice Award at the Amesbury Carriage Museum's annual Carriage Festival. The carriage, which was bequeathed to the Society by Forrest Reynolds, was built in Newton circa 1870.
- In 2014, obtained a state grant from the NH State Council on the Arts for the restoration of the town's two stage curtains. The restoration was completed by Curtains without Borders members and society volunteers.



- Completed the electronic cataloging of the town's historic documents, artifacts, photos, etc.
- Worked with the Newton Cemetery Trustees to create and install a list of all the Newton residents who enlisted in all wars at the Veteran's Memorial located at the Willow Grove Cemetery.
- Completed the creation and activation of the Society's website.
- Installed electricity in and completed major structural repairs to the Marshall House Museum barn.
- Replaced the sign at the Marshall House Museum.

- Provided a cover photo and write up for the 2014, 2015, & 2017 annual town reports.



The Newton Board of Selectmen dedicated the 2015 annual Town Report to the Society.

- Hosted the 2016 Historic N. E. Book Award event at the Newton Town Hall.
- Society members donated labor to install exterior safety railings at the Gale Library.
- Assisted the public with many research requests pertaining to ancestral information. The research is often done in conjunction with the Newton Cemetery Trustees.
- Successfully submitted a historical Newton photo for inclusion in the Homeland Security 2018 and 2019 Emergency Public Information calendars.
- Successfully submitted two Newton historical photos for inclusion in the Pentucket Bank 2019 calendar.
- Created over 1,000 informational display cards for use with the rotating displays at the town museums.

Planning Board

Introduction

The Planning Board, established under RSA 673, is charged with holding Public Hearings on applications for subdivisions and site plans, with application of Newton voter-approved zoning ordinances.

Organization

It is comprised of 7 members, with up to 5 alternate members. Members are elected for staggered terms. In addition to an Administrative Assistant, the Board hires the services of a part-time Circuit Rider from the Rockingham Planning Commission to assist in judiciously applying town zoning ordinances.

Meetings are held twice each month, for Public Hearings on properly noticed applications, and to conduct other Board business.



Community Access

The Planning Board holds meetings with Public Hearings twice a month. The Planning Office has regular hours at Town Hall.

Forms, zoning ordinances and policies and procedures are published on the Newton Town Website.

Responsibilities

The Planning Board is also responsible for the Master Plan, which by RSA is the legal basis for all zoning ordinances enacted and enforced in Newton. From time to time, the Planning Board makes recommendations for zoning ordinance updates and changes, reflecting changes in state or federal law or to better reflect the Vision and details of the Master Plan. All zoning ordinances are set by the voters in local Spring voting.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Existing Conditions

Newton Police Department is open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Police coverage is comprised of a full-time Police Chief, 6 full-time officers, 9 part-time officers, 1 part-time animal control officer and 1 full-time office manager.

The Department participates in a mutual aid agreement with all towns located within Rockingham county.

Building

The building that houses the police department located at 8A Merrimac Road is about 4,625 square feet. The current building is meeting the needs of the department as it grows with our current population.



The building itself will need future repairs and/or replacements to include:

- a new roof (the current roof has been patched several times and is approaching its end-of-life expectancy) siding is in need of replacement.
- the windows are at end-of-life expectancy
- the current parking lot is in need of repair and will need to be repaved.

Equipment

The Police department has 8 Police cruisers.

Two OHRVs

One incident command van

The radio communication system consists of a base station radio located in the police department. The police department relies on the Rockingham County Centralized Dispatch. Each cruiser is equipped with a “Cruiser Radio” along with each officer having a portable radio.

Future Needs:

The Newton Police Department will need to add a generator to its town channel. Currently the town channel is run on battery back-up only. A generator would solve this issue allowing for the channel to be utilized during power outages.

Repairs to the Police department building as aforementioned.

The Newton Police will need to update the base radio system in the building to help with radio communications. The system is comprised of a single base radio. Given the square footage of the building, more radios will be needed to help with communications effectiveness.



Photo courtesy of Marie Sapienza

Other Public Safety Concerns & Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to providing the necessary support to allow the police department to become national accredited (CALEA), the town's insurance rate will be reduced significantly. This will result in

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meaningful savings to the taxpayers of Newton.

- Community policing has proven to be very successful throughout the country. Even small towns like Newton can benefit from that philosophy. The more the community and the police can do to develop a partnership, the better the law enforcement service will be. We need to train our officers in that state-of-the-art law enforcement principle. We also need to educate our citizens in the value of participating in a community policing philosophy.



Photo courtesy of Diane Glose

Recreation Commission

Introduction

The Recreation Commission organizes events and activities for the Town of Newton. It has the responsibility for overseeing the Town Beach, Greenie Park and the Town boat launch.

Group Composition

The Commission is comprised of four Members, one representative from the Board of Selectmen, one Alternate Member, and a paid Secretary.

Future Challenges and Plans

Greenie Park is the site of a new Town playground developed with funds raised by the Friends of Newton Recreation. The playground equipment will be expanded in the coming years, and it is expected that the abutting skateboard park will be refurbished with funds from grants and donations. The playground will need new wood chips in 2022.



Plans to improve the monitoring system for the police surveillance cameras and telephone emergency system for lifeguards are in the works. Additional beach sand is needed at the Town Beach but will not be spread until it is approved by the Newton Conservation Commission and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. A volunteer Eagle Scout is raising funds to build a 12 x 20-foot patio, which will be accompanied by two picnic tables and placed in the shaded area of the Town Beach in the coming year.

The Town boat launch will need regrading in the future due to erosion and runoff that has caused ruts and unlevel ground. This will require coordination with the Conservation Commission and the Country Pond Lake

Association.



Refuse Disposal and Utilities

Introduction

Newton has no municipal water supply or sewage system. There is a Solid Waste Transfer Station/Brush disposal site under WMD Permit No DES-SW-90-012. Permit # 651 grants the town authorization to burn wood and yard wastes, based on NHDES Air Resources Division and Waste Management Division administrative rules. The permit requires annual renewal.

The Transfer Station, administered by the Board of Selectmen, is located off Dugway Road. There is a town-appointed manager and other workers. A Town Ordinance, last amended in 1996, governs the operation.

The Solid Waste Transfer Station is located on a former landfill. The town has contracted with R.W. Gillespie & Associates to test the site. Wells in the groundwater management zone are tested in the spring and fall for 8

metals identified in the Safe Water Drinking Act.

Newton contracts with private trash companies to haul the waste from the transfer station to Haverhill or North Andover incinerators. Recycling of cardboard, plastic and glass takes place for reduction of weight and cost.

Southeastern Rockingham County Solid Waste Management District

Newton is one of the towns comprising the Southeastern Rockingham County Solid Waste Management District. In July 1985, these towns organized formally as a District under NH RSA 149-M, with by-laws. Newton Town Hall has served as meeting headquarters. The primary charge of the District is the completion of a planning document outlining long-range disposal plans for solid waste.



2020 Tonnage

Refuse	1407.33 Tons
Cardboard	125.17 Tons
Bulky Items	341.59 Tons

Future Needs

Factors to be considered for future recommendations:

- Shutdown of local incinerators and or landfill that will increase costs
- Population increase, leading to increase in waste
- Staying aware of EPA Regulations which may eliminate the Burn Permit

Recommendations:

- See income revenue since recyclables are no longer viable income sources
- Must enforce transfer station regulations
 - Notably #2, 11, 12 & 16
 - Helps to eliminate non-compliant waste disposal
- Adhere to state PIP 651
- Continually review hauling bids for lowest cost
- Seek out bids for landfill or incinerator sites to lower cost

School System

The Sanborn Regional School District provides education for grades Kindergarten – 12th for both Kingston and Newton. In addition, Pre-K for 3 and 4 year-olds with federally-identified and -mandated needs as well as on a tuition basis is available through Sanborn.

History & Organization

The District was organized in 1965 as SAU 17, with use of the formerly private Sanborn Seminary as the High School. Prior to 1965, High School students tuitioned to other area high schools, and each town had its own elementary school. All the school buildings are owned by the District. Fremont has a tuition contract with Sanborn for its High School students currently.



The School District educates Pre-K to grade 3 at Bakie School in Kingston, grades 4-6 at Memorial School in Newton, and maintains separate Middle School for grades 7-8 and High School for grades 9-12, with some shared facilities, at the Middle and High School in Kingston. In addition, the District owns the old Middle School building in Newton, partially rented to a Charter School for Special Needs students.

Newton and Kingston have divergent tax bases, such that spending goals for the District can differ. School spending represents 80-95% of property taxes in New Hampshire. Kingston has about a 50% higher population and tax base than Newton, while Newton students comprise 45% of the student enrollment at this writing, and therefore Newton taxpayers fund 45% of the local portion of the school district operating budget.

This divergence in ability to pay led to a vote to leave the District in 1995 that failed to pass by 10 votes.

School budgets have held steady for the past 7 years, due to eliminating unproductive spending, staff reductions in response to declining enrollment and reconfiguring use of facilities, while approving increased staff contracts.

In 2007, a new High School was approved by District voters and opened in Kingston. For a time the Seminary and adjunct buildings were occupied by District administrators, but then abandoned and vacant. The District agreed to sell them to a developer of historic buildings in 2020, with retention of ability to use the

Swasey Gym in perpetuity. The Chase athletic fields are still owned by the District.



Challenges

Newton school enrollment increased sharply in the 1990's and had been declining in more recent years. Due to location changes spawned by the COVID19 pandemic, more families are moving into Newton, which has slowed or stopped the enrollment decline.

Sanborn professional staff are paid less than in surrounding Districts. There was a history of 4 failed contracts before 2017 that resulted in lower pay scales due to lost steps and cost of living increases. As a result, staff retention has been a challenge.

The school district addresses both academic and social and emotional learning goals in its Portrait of a Graduate. Academic outcomes have fallen short of New Hampshire norms and community expectations for many years. The school administration has identified a 4-point plan to address the needs for improvement, funded by savings from the school reconfigurations with no increase in taxes. Align the curriculum K-12 (vertically) with specific, annual goals (horizontally):

1. Align the curriculum K-12 (vertically) with specific, annual goals (horizontally)

2. Align our assessments to the curriculum
3. Adjust instruction based on assessment data
4. Provide intervention when appropriate for students who are behind.

TOWN HALL



Photo courtesy of Marie Sapienza

Existing Conditions

The original Town Hall, located on Town Hall Road, suffered a fire in 1888. The building was rebuilt shortly thereafter and continues to house the town administrative services. The Selectmen's Office, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, and Bookkeeper have their own office space. The Town Administrator and Part-time Assessor share an office. The Treasurer, Building Department, and Health Officer are located in the back room behind the kitchen. In the main hall is the Food Pantry. What once was the stage now holds the cable operating equipment. Behind that is a small conference room and the Planning Board office.

The fire protection alarm was upgraded to be wireless in 2020. A generator was installed that can support the entire building. Air conditioning units were installed in the main hall and cable room. Other improvements to the building included replacing the roof in 1979, installing vinyl siding and insulation in 1981, and repainting the interior and hall floor. No other improvements have been done.

Deficiencies

The building has accessibility issues. The small conference room behind the cable room has only one means of egress. There is only 1 entrance/exit on both floors that are handicap accessible. The side parking lot is sloped which makes it difficult for those with a walking disability to enter/exit their vehicle especially if in a wheelchair.

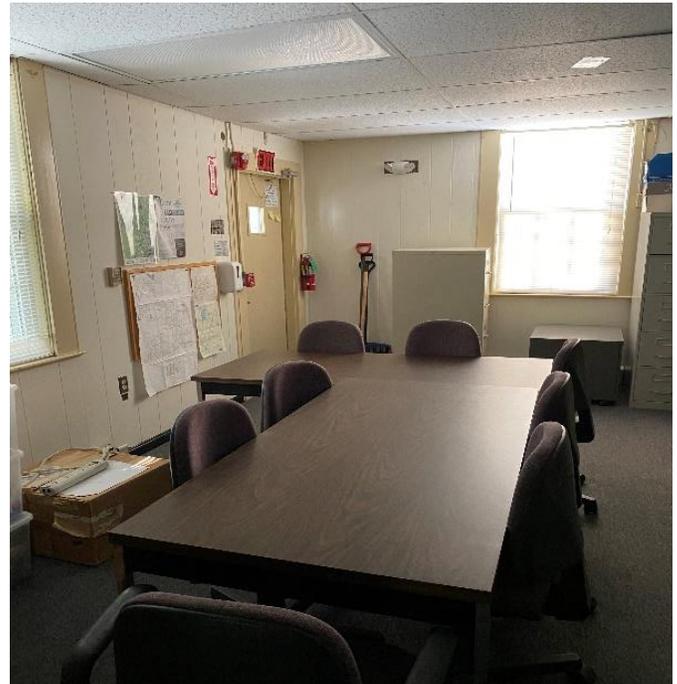


During winter months large icicles hang from the roof on the side parking lot. They have been known to fall into the parking area and

could cause damage to vehicles as well as injury to visitors.

The parking lot is adequate for employees but not when there are well-attended meetings or when the hall is used for elections.

A sprinkler system was installed but the Town never finished the installation therefore the sprinkler heads were removed because it provided a false sense of safety.



Visitors must pass through the small staff kitchen to speak with the Treasurer, Building Department or Health Officer.

The flooring in the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office slopes 2" for 8' near the counter where the staff interacts with clients.

Recommendation

The Town should consider building a new Town Hall that meets the growing needs of the Town and is easily accessible to all.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Newton's Board of Appeals, properly called the Zoning Board of Adjustment per NH RSA 672-678, is responsible for hearing and voting on variance applications from town zoning ordinances and as a Board of Adjustment for waivers from administrative rulings. It is the remedy under law for applicants who would suffer undue hardship by enforcement of a zoning ordinance or administrative decision.

The Board is comprised of 5 appointed members and up to 5 alternates. Hearings are held once a month or more often if the need arises.